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gazing upon the beloved. His love is, on the whole, rather depressing. It is, however, past doubt that, although the world at large is not going to give Mr. Rossetti anything like the place that has been claimed for him, — though it is even probable that the fashion of his poetry will very soon pass away and be gone for good, and the opinion of his genius fall to an opinion that he is a man of the temperament of genius lacking power to give effect, in words at least, to a nature and gifts rare rather than strong or valuable, nevertheless it will be admitted that he is an elaborately skilful love-poet of narrow range, who affords an occasional touch that makes the reader hesitate and consider whether he has not now and again struggled out and really emerged as a poet worthy of the name. We cannot say that in our own case the hesitation has ever lasted long. Nor can we say that we have not oftener hesitated and almost made up our mind to say of him, that he is very unprofitable, — a writer so affected, sentimental, and painfully self-conscious that the best that can be done in his case is to hope that this book of his, as it has “unpacked his bosom” of so much that is unhealthy, may have done him more good than it has given others pleasure. Of course to say so would be to speak far too harshly, and would convey a false impression. To say so would, however, express accurately enough one mood of mind into which the reader is thrown during the perusal of these poems; and it would really be no falser than very much of the praises which they have called out.

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3. — *History of the Norman Kings of England. From a new Collation of the Contemporary Chronicles.* By THOMAS COBBE, Barrister of the Inner Temple. London: Longmans, Green, & Co. 1869. 8vo. pp. xciii, 387.

MR. COBBE's history of the Norman Kings will serve very well for a while as a continuation of Mr. Freeman's incomplete work. It commences at the point which the latter has just reached, — the Conquest, and continues to the death of Stephen. Further, the two writers agree sufficiently well upon the nature of the early Constitution, and — what is more to the purpose — the nature of the Conquest, and the relation which the new king sustained to the English people. On the rather unimportant point whether Edward the Confessor nominated Harold as his successor, Mr. Cobbe doubts where Mr. Freeman believes; but on the more vital questions of the legitimacy of Harold's royalty, and the utter nullity of William's claims, they are entirely at one. Mr. Cobbe would vex the soul of Mr. Freeman by his use of the word *Saxon*, and

he seems to hold more nearly the old views as to the introduction of the Feudal System by William. But then he pays very little attention to points of this sort, and as Mr. Freeman has not yet arrived at the full discussion of it, it makes little difference after all. As a writer, the two are not to be compared; for Mr. Freeman's graphic and vigorous style forms a strong contrast to the strange use of language which prevails in this volume. Mr. Cobbe's style is indeed a very vicious one, abounding in participles and relatives, in unusual and obsolete words and in short, jerky sentences. Thus, page 282, "Tidings spread throughout the land. The empress had come to try her cause. The issue, already in use, enhanced by so much, approached the crisis. England alarmed, every malcontent took heart; but the spirit of all royalists veiled." Sometimes there is a real vigor in these short sentences, as, page 207, at a Synod at Westminster: "Seventeen articles, mostly inconvenient, were now added to men's conscience." But in general they serve to disprove, if it needed to be disproved, the popular superstition that vigor and picturesqueness reside in short sentences. And as for Mr. Cobbe's vocabulary, he delights in such terms — probably taken bodily from his chronicles, — as *renege*, *denay*, *facete*, *métier*, *wiseand*, *haut barons*, to *edify* a castle, and *racial* stimulus (for stimulus of race).

These faults of style are more prominent in some portions of the work than in others; where Mr. Cobbe is strongly interested, he writes freely and vigorously, in a more natural and quite agreeable style. And his narrative of events, which in the reign of Henry Beauclerc — whom he hates — is confused and clumsy, warms into life under Stephen, — whom he likes, — and becomes animated and clear. He gives one hundred and thirty-five pages to Stephen's twenty-nine years, while Henry's thirty-five have only a hundred. So that this dreariest and most anarchical portion of English history really becomes somewhat comprehensible in his hands, and this is perhaps the best service that Mr. Cobbe has done to historical study in this volume.

We will quote a passage from the Preface, page xxviii, as a specimen of Mr. Cobbe's best style, in spite of an excessive bluntness of expression, and of some of his prevailing faults. He is speaking of the monkish chronicles, and describing the manner in which they depict the four Norman kings.

"In these writers William stands before us harsh, rapacious, yet not forbidding wholly nor without recognition for some greatness; as a soldier, courageous to the height, if not chivalrous; as a statesman, true to his purpose, careful of his prize. A king of men, ruling by the sword, austere, awful, in whom the majesty of the realm might shine

awhile. Scarcely heroic, yet capable in his work; captain of a gang of robbers, too, to whom the country was an exchequer; chaste, voracious, silent, friendly, cautious, fearless; whom few of his sort surpass.

"Rufus — in whose time 'men obeyed the king rather than justice,' too coarse to be really magnanimous; potent in the flesh 'as a young bull'; one sinning 'as it were with a cart rope'; who, with the palace-lights, quenched shame — they portray great in arms, in affairs rude; ignorant in all things, offensive; one scarcely redeemed from abhorrence by pity; a projector, not, as his father, fortunate; and with this other difference that, whereas the one utilized the religious sentiment as a social bond, the other defied God and man.

"Henry, the clerk and favorite of clerks, clerks show selfish by rule and line, void of natural affections, consummately practised in double-dealing, 'of designs inscrutable.' They reverence him, but they distinguish not between his successes and the means thereof. Ascribing glory to the Almighty for his three chief gifts, wisdom, victory, wealth, they gloze over the perfidy, the ambition, the avarice, which they note in him. He merited the praise of churchmen by foundations, by address in ecclesiastical concerns, by timely deference to class prejudices. He restored the nightly torches in his palace; but in the blaze of panegyric we discover his demerits.

"Stephen they admire while greatly blaming. Aware that through gentleness he ruined peace, they sedulously separate the man from the miseries of his reign. They point to his prime perjury as if it were a peculiar taint in him affecting his cause, and withal work out a *Nemesis* through the treasons of his subjects; forgetful that King Henry had caused the nobles to forswear themselves in the matter of the treaty with Duke Robert, and had thriven notwithstanding."

Mr. Cobbe might easily take high rank as an historian; for he is industrious and honest, and while maintaining his impartiality, shows a sympathy and personal interest in his characters, which is a valuable quality in an historian. But after all, one gathers nothing so distinctly from reading this book as the confirmation of one's previous impression that the reigns of these Norman kings were not worth knowing, and that the sooner they are forgotten the better. Yet this impression is not a correct one. The *events* of these reigns are, it is true, confused and unimportant; and it was hardly worth while to spend so much labor on what is, after all, a mere chronicle of dreary wars and intrigues. But with all the confusion and anarchy, in which the Norman period resembles the later Carolingian period, it resembles it likewise in its real historical value. These obscure and tiresome years possess great constitutional interest, if we could

only get at it ; for it was during these years that the Feudal System was developed in England, just as it was during the later Carolingian period on the Continent ; in these years it was that the old Constitution of England was forgotten, and that the nation was prepared by degrees for that new life that began under the Plantagenets. It is not, therefore, these dull campaigns, these plots and treasons and cruelties, that the reader wants. Mr. Cobbe has done a service in bringing some order out of the tangled snarl of the chronicles ; but he would have done better still if he had attempted to do for the constitutional changes what he has done for the dynastic events. And it is not that he lacks power for this, for his best passages are those in which he leaves the annals, and analyzes character or motives, or describes ecclesiastical events,—for in regard to these he has done some good work ; witness the account of the Council of Rheims, held by Pope Calixtus II. But as Mr. Cobbe neither attempts himself to unravel the constitutional history of this epoch nor gives us the materials to do it for ourselves, we must wait in patience for Mr. Freeman's closing volumes, having entire confidence that in them we shall find just what we want.

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5. — *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut from October, 1706, to October, 1716, with the Council Journal from October, 1710, to February, 1717, transcribed and edited in accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly.* BY CHARLES J. HOADLY, Librarian of the State Library. Hartford: Press of Case, Lockwood, and Brainard. 1870. 8vo. pp. 612.

No community in the world has so good a printed record of its administrative history as Connecticut. Nothing of the kind could be possessed by European nations, with their origins in times when there was no printing and little writing, and with their very different methods of transacting public business. The governments of our New England plantations kept their journals from the first. Those of Massachusetts and of Plymouth down to the time of the Revolution of the seventeenth century have been excellently well produced in print by Mr. Shurtleff and Mr. Pulsifer ; but their plan, determined by the legislative order under which they acted, did not admit of such illustrations from collateral sources as have been collected by the Rhode Island and Connecticut editors. Mr. Bartlett's "Records of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations," covering, as far as the extant materials allow, the whole ground from the beginning to the year 1792, is extremely rich in such illustrations, but it is necessarily less satisfactory,